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Foreign Military Digests

Digests of articles from foreign military periodicals; other items of interest from foreign publications are summarized in the Catalog of Selected Periodical Articles.

Defense of a Command Post in Street Combat

[Translated at the Command and General Staff School, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, from a Russian article in *Krasnaya Zvezda* 30 October 1942.]

The experience of battles for Stalingrad has shown that it is very often necessary to place command posts in the city, in streets, among units engaged in combat. In such cases protection and defense of command posts should be organized with the greatest care. The principal requirement is that no enemy tanks or small groups armed with automatic weapons should be permitted to penetrate the vicinity of the command post. The command post should be, whenever possible, established in places not easily accessible to tanks, places with natural antitank obstacles. Stubborn street battles, in which our troops in Stalingrad are engaged, have already provided a certain practice in the selection, protection and defense of command posts.

Units which were engaged in direct defense of a command post took up defensive positions in accordance with a determined plan. An alleyway was protected from the direction of several blocks. In some houses two or three men armed with automatic rifles were placed. It was their task not to permit infiltration by enemy groups armed with automatic weapons. Antitank-rifle crews took up positions on street crossings in places where German tanks might appear.

To illustrate: At noon the Germans undertook a strong attack against the neighboring unit. Having broken the defense, ten tanks appeared on the division's left flank, threatening the command post. There arose an exceptionally difficult situation, but at a street crossing the tanks were met by armor-piercing fire. One antitank rifle crew stopped the leading enemy tank with the first round and set it on fire with the second. The same fate met the second and third tanks. The remaining enemy tanks turned their vehicles back. The personnel of the headquarters platoon took advantage of this situation and disabled two more enemy tanks with incendiary bottles. The well conceived plan of defense of the command post enabled the staff to work in safety and assured the uninterrupted nature of command.

Another example: The CP of a certain unit was situated in a viaduct passing under a highway. This place was not selected by accident, for the highway ran into vacant space and has not yet been fired on by artillery or bombed from the air. To provide secure protection of headquarters, a chain of OP's was organized. These were placed in demolished buildings, shell and bomb holes—in those directions where enemy tanks and men armed with automatic weapons were certain to appear.

At night the observers noticed that the enemy in numbers up to a company

in strength and armed with automatic weapons was moving in small groups of ten to fifteen men, using the ruins of buildings and irregularities of the ground. Their actions were supported by intensive artillery and mortar fire. At this time not more than fifteen men from the headquarters platoon were at the CP, and naturally it was very difficult to repel the enemy attack with such weak forces. Consequently, staff officers were called upon to take up defense.

The enemy did not cease fire, continuing to control the exit from the viaduct. However, the clouds of dust and smoke raised by shell bursts helped our men to place mines at the dangerous spot without suffering any losses. Estimating the situation, the Chief of Staff reached the conclusion that he would be able to withstand enemy pressure even with small forces and inflict losses on the enemy. A group of officers was divided into two groups. The first group, commanded by a captain, was to attack the Germans from the rear; and the second group, led by a junior lieutenant, was to attack on the right flank. A third group was to hold the enemy frontal attack.

The plan of the Chief of Staff had fully justified itself. At a pre-arranged signal the first group of officers proceeded to a neighboring street, reached an enemy mortar battery without being seen and destroyed the latter. German automatic-weapons operators, dazed by such boldness, began to retreat in disorder. At the same time the noise of automatic-weapons fire and hand-grenade explosions was heard on the right flank. The

Germans were thrown into confusion and fearing encirclement ran for the narrow defile between building ruins. Here they were met by the fire of observers who were protecting approaches to the CP. In a short engagement heavy losses were inflicted on the Germans.

When protecting a CP in a city it is very often necessary to use small caliber artillery in order to repulse a tank attack. This is caused by the fact that the Germans send into the streets large masses of tanks which are difficult to combat by antitank rifle fire alone. Very recently twenty-two German tanks moved into attack against the CP of a certain division. The tanks were moving in two groups. The first group, consisting of heavy medium tanks, was moving frontally, directly endangering the CP. The second group was by-passing it. The first group of tanks was engaged by a platoon of 45-mm guns. Point blank fire disabled five tanks, and these vehicles blocked the road for the remaining ones and in this way deprived the tanks of the second echelon of freedom of maneuver. Antitank riflemen and personnel of the headquarters platoon took care of the second group of tanks. In this manner the enemy tank attack was repulsed by the close cooperation of artillery with antitank rifles.

What, then, are the general deductions which can be made? It serves a useful purpose to make up special patrols from the headquarters platoon personnel whose mission will be to defend the CP at its approaches. In addition to this, the fire system must be organized so as to control not only the streets but also the individual blocks. In our opinion it is necessary to have a reserve of antitank elements. Besides the main CP it is necessary to have in reserve a series of CP's. All this will insure invulnerability of the CP and its uninterrupted activity.

Night Pursuit

[Translated at the Command and General Staff School, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, from a German article in *Militär-Wochenblatt* 18 September 1942.]

A resolute commander will not hesitate to use the night for attack if this is necessary for the completion of a victory or for taking advantage of one for the purpose of gaining possession of important points of departure or holding the adversary where he is.

From Truppenführung (Troop Leadership).

Situation: Reinforced 1st Battalion, in action since 23 October, has, on the evening of 27 October, taken village "A" and the hill to the north of it, fighting an enemy of the strength of one company, and in compliance with regimental orders, is temporarily on the defensive.

On being attacked by the 1st Battalion, the enemy has withdrawn along the highway to the north and northeast. One machine gun and one heavy trench mortar are still firing on Hill No. 50; one light gun is firing on the 1st Company out of the region to the west of Hill No. 50.

During the evening hours, air reconnaissance has observed motor vehicles assembled in "D"; there appear to be tanks, also.

Heavy Weapons: One platoon of heavy infantry guns and one platoon of light AT cannon are attached to the 1st Battalion.

Weather: 37 degrees Fahrenheit; deep mud, poor visibility.